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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VILNIUS 000395

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR MULL; DEPT FOR EUR;  
NSC FOR AMBASSADOR FRIED

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SUBJECT: YOUR VILNIUS VISIT: REWARDING THE LOYAL AND  
CALMING THE WATERS

Classified By: Ambassador Steve Mull; Reason 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

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1. (C) Your bilateral program in Vilnius during the NATO Ministerial will score important advances in keeping this loyal ally in Iraq and Afghanistan, highlight our joint efforts for a democratic Belarus, and set the stage for a successful U.S.-Baltic summit in Riga next month. It will also help support more constructive Lithuanian-Russian relations following recent turbulence. I recommend you concentrate on five key themes:

--Gratitude for Lithuania's ambitious activism on our common interests, especially in standing up a PRT in Afghanistan and committing to keep troops in Iraq in 2006;

--Appreciation for Lithuania's success in establishing itself as a democracy, and welcoming its commitment to continue to improve tolerance;

--Encouragement of Lithuania's missionary work in supporting democracy from Belarus through Ukraine to the southern Caucasus states;

--Respect for President Adamkus's decision against attending May 9 ceremonies in Moscow, while urging Baltic harmony and the importance of constructive relations with Russia; and

--Emphasis on our determination to work with Lithuania and others in the Visa Waiver Roadmap process.

Welcome Back!

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2. (C) Madam Secretary, the entire U.S. Mission joins me in warmly welcoming you back to Vilnius for the NATO Informal Ministerial April 20-21. Since your last visit with President Bush in November 2002, Lithuania has undergone a convulsive period of internal political drama featuring seven elections, three presidents, two governments and parliaments and Europe's first presidential impeachment. Against this turbulent backdrop, the country in the last year celebrated its epochal accessions to NATO and the European Union, posted continuing explosive economic growth and launched a wave of diplomatic activism enthusiastically supportive of U.S. global objectives. Lithuania hosts \$352 million in U.S. direct investment, mostly in food processing, real estate and wholesale/retail operations. Additionally, the hundreds of Lithuanian-Americans who live here (including President Valdas Adamkus, a former EPA administrator from Chicago) play a prominent role in public, commercial and religious life.

Foreign Policy Consensus and Activism

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3. (C) Lithuania's internal political acrimony sometimes obscures the broad political consensus that has guided its foreign policy since regaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Its tenets are simple: strong support for the transatlantic bond; integration with western political and economic institutions; and promotion of democracy throughout the former Soviet Union. In recent years, that consensus has powered an ambitious foreign policy that consistently projects beyond Lithuania's diminutive size. It has had troops on the ground in Iraq for two years (currently 115), and vowed on April 12 to keep them there into 2006. It readily answered our plea to lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghowr province, Afghanistan beginning this summer. It has provided a vast array (for its size) of support to the developing states in the South Caucasus in military, governance and diplomatic spheres. Closer to home, it is proud of his strong activism in support of democracy in Ukraine, where President Adamkus served as a co-mediator of the election crisis last fall. On Belarus, Lithuania recently granted asylum to the European Humanitarian University that Minsk had closed down, and plans to support it as a mecca for a democratic student movement and possibly a source for independent broadcasting into Belarus. Its parliament has formed a Belarus action group to promote broad ties with democratic forces in Belarus, and its government

actively pressures the EU for more resources in support of the democracy movement.

14. (C) Although increasingly focused on the requirements of European Union membership, a special relationship with the United States remains Lithuania's most prized foreign policy asset. It maintains an extraordinarily close intelligence liaison relationship with us, has been completely responsive to our requests in the Global War on Terrorism, and is careful to coordinate all of its foreign policy initiatives with us.

#### Tensions with Russia -----

15. (C) Lithuania's already complicated relations with Russia have grown especially problematic in the past year. Lithuania has expelled five Russian diplomats for espionage in the past 14 months, and various political leaders have increasingly warned of Russian efforts to infiltrate the parliament and government. Tensions grew in the wake of Adamkus's decision to decline Moscow's invitation to WWII commemorative ceremonies on May 9, especially when the local Russian Ambassador in response publicly called Lithuanians "a rabble of anti-Russian scoundrels" and threatened a cutoff of energy supplies. Meanwhile, since the new year, emotive charges that Foreign Minister Valionis and State Security Department Chief Pocius had obscured Soviet-era KGB links pushed up the temperature even further. A parliamentary commission absolved both, but some dissatisfied members of parliament have launched a hunger strike demanding their resignations.

16. (C) Valionis traveled to Moscow April 8 for a quickly scheduled meeting with Lavrov in a successful attempt to put relations on a more constructive footing. Valionis told me April 12 that Lavrov had: instructed his Ambassador in Vilnius to cease all public activity until further notice; committed to positive and constructive Russian participation at the Vilnius NATO events; promised renewed attention to Lithuanian requests for more favorable tariff treatment of Russian exports through Lithuanian ports and repatriation of Lithuanian deposits in Russian banks; agreed to discuss all future espionage cases and expulsions out of the public light; and expressed complete understanding for Lithuania's not coming to Moscow May 9. In return, Valionis declared Lithuania's commitment to constructive relations with Russia, announced a temporary moratorium on efforts to seek Russian compensation for the Soviet annexation of Lithuania, and privately agreed to stop all Lithuanian government comments about the local Russian Ambassador's inflammatory remarks.

#### Baltic Squabbling -----

17. (C) The May 9 controversy also caused some crankiness in relations among the Baltic states. Adamkus bitterly complains in private that by going to Moscow, Vike-Freiberga shattered Baltic unity and is attempting to cast Latvia as the Baltic leader (undermining Lithuania's own ambition to claim that mantle.) In response, Lithuania worked closely with Estonia in announcing a joint decision to boycott the Moscow events, and then launched a crude campaign to move the venue of the proposed summit from Riga to Tallinn (without coordinating with Estonia). In the end, Adamkus welcomed the invitation to meet President Bush and his Baltic colleagues in Riga, but he is still angling for a private session with President Bush.

#### Bilateral Relations -----

18. (C) The U.S. Mission works hard to keep Lithuania on board with our broad global agenda. Internally, we support efforts to reconstitute Jewish property confiscated during the Holocaust, promote tolerance of minorities, and assist local law enforcement capabilities in the battle against terrorism, corruption and WMD smuggling. The only blot on an otherwise rosy bilateral relationship is widespread public disaffection with U.S. visa requirements. The discontent has its roots in the 30 percent refusal rate for tourist visa applicants that results from Lithuanian proclivities for illegal work in the United States and overstaying visas. President Bush's announcement of the Visa Waiver Roadmap initiative in February was widely popular here -- your reiteration of it during your visit will contribute to your visit's success.

#### Your Schedule -----

19. (C) In your ride from the airport to the Presidency with Foreign Minister Valionis, I recommend you pay tribute to his energetic efforts in support of democracy in the former Soviet Union, particularly in Belarus and the South Caucasus; welcome his government's strong commitment to lead the Afghanistan PRT and to maintain troops in Iraq in 2006; and

hear his preview of the Ministerial.

110. (C) President Adamkus in his meeting with you will want to:

--spell out Lithuania's plans for continuing its support of democracy throughout the former Soviet Union, especially in Belarus;

--review Lithuania's operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

--discuss Lithuanian concerns about Russia, and especially hear a report on your just-concluded visit there;

--hear the latest plans for the Riga Summit, and possibly express his interest in a private meeting with the President; and

--seek reassurance that the U.S. understands his decision not to go to Moscow on May 9.

111. (C) Your meeting with the Belarusian opposition in conjunction with Foreign Minister Valionis will give prominence to President Bush's commitment to spread democracy, and energize even great Lithuanian activism in this direction, both bilaterally and through the European Union.

Themes  
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112. (C) Focusing on the following themes in your meetings and in the press will help ensure your visit's success:

--Gratitude for Lithuania's ambitious activism on our common interests, especially in standing up a PRT in Afghanistan and committing to keep troops in Iraq in 2006;

--Appreciation for Lithuania's success in establishing itself as a democracy, and welcoming its commitment to continue to improve tolerance;

--Encouragement of Lithuania's missionary work in supporting democracy from Belarus through Ukraine to the southern Caucasus states;

--Respect for President Adamkus's decision against attending May 9 ceremonies in Moscow, while urging Baltic harmony and the importance of constructive relations with Russia; and

--Emphasis on our determination to work with Lithuania and others in Visa Waiver Roadmap process.

Your Team  
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113. I am also grateful for your willingness to meet and greet this Mission's employees and their families. It is my good fortune to lead a talented, dedicated staff of 175 Lithuanian and American employees. They are all thrilled with the prospect of meeting you next week.  
Mull